

***Conservative nature of Architecture in the Historical
City center of Saint Petersburg
and its' influence on the architectural development of the city***

Masters in Urbanism, Architecture and Building Science

Student: Anna Shishkina

Year:2023

Track: Architecture

Introduction and research structure

Saint Petersburg is a second-largest city in Russia, having a population over 6 million people. Located in the northern part of the country on the edge of the Baltic Sea it was founded by tsar Peter the Great in 1703 as a future capital for Russian Empire. Tsar was wishing the new capital to become the most beautiful city in Europe and the city was built with an intention to open up Russia towards western traditions and western European world. Built in record time Saint Petersburg became the capital in 1712 and remained such through the rise of Russia as one of the strongest Empires in the world until 1918 and is still known for its beauty and unique architecture styles.

Today the first core of the city – its` historic part built through 18-19th centuries – is world known as Northern Venice and conquers the hearts of millions visitors. But through 300 years of its` history the city turned from being one of the most progressive cities in Russia into the city with the prejudice to anything new. Today the city is trying to keep its` “historical appearance”, to preserve how it looked like when it was envisioned by one of the greatest tsars in Russian History, but this intension is leading the historic city center of Saint Petersburg to its` devastation.

If one visits Saint Petersburg, what will be found on the touristic routes and showed off city center are the shining facades of palaces, beautiful views of architectural ensembles on the canals and golden spires of cathedrals. But if the observer would care to take a deeper look into the insides of the city the discoveries would be the opposite. Numerous buildings in the city center of Saint Petersburg are rotting from inside, dying behind the closed doors, abandoned by their inhabitants, who believe that the historic appearance of the city should be kept, but prefer to move to more luxurious river-side apartment complexes (Maria Elkina, 2020)

In this Research Paper I wish to explore what are the origins of *conservatism* among the citizens of Saint Petersburg and the reasons behind historic center of Saint Petersburg being captured in its` past. I will aim to discover what are the roots of *conservative views* of its` citizens and how to re-interpret the *gaps* in the historic fabric.

During my research I would be focusing on revealing why the city have formed its` conservative views and how they are influencing the development of the city and its` architecture. I wish to reveal the anchor points that do not allow the architecture of the city to move forward and discover how the field of the debate around the possible ways that the historic city center of Saint Petersburg and its` architecture can develop. This research is started with a belief that the development of contemporary architecture is necessary for the historic city center and the architecture of Saint Petersburg in general and that current conservative nature is holding the city behind, causing the decay of the historical heritage. Therefore the research question that will be discussed in this paper is the following:

Which methods can influence the discussion about applying contemporary architecture in historically important areas of the city of Saint Petersburg?

The main research question will be supported by a number of sub questions, which will help to open up the topic and are aimed to get a better overview of the current architectural debates and the contexts of the city.

1. What are the contextual values of the historic city center of Saint Petersburg? When and how were they introduced to the city?
2. How do conservative views influence the city? Why the conservative views of the city and its' citizens have developed?
3. What is influencing the opinions of the people and (how) can architecture environment change them?

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of his Master Thesis will be based on researching the cities` development and the process of formation of not only its` appearance today, but also the views of its` citizens. The theoretical framework will be supported with three main topics that would be gradually explored.

Topic 1: Architecture Values of Saint Petersburg

In order to understand the city it is important to understand its` values – architectural, historical, cultural. The city of Saint Petersburg has initially gained its` appearance after bringing together the inspiration of various European cities, but later on it developed its` own architecture. I would look into what can be considered the main architecture and cultural values of today and how those values appear in the context.

Topic 2: The roots of conservatism discourse about the contemporary development of the city

In this section I wish to have a look at the possible reasons that lead to the formation of conservative views around the treatment of architecture of Saint Petersburg. I also will research the current discourse which talks about the future ways the city can develop.

Topic 3: The gaps between the Architecture and the citizens

The conservative views of the citizens of Saint Petersburg (as well as some architects) produces a gap in between the developing architecture trends and the architecture of the rest of the world. I wish to understand the ways that those two sides correlate and interact with each other as well as seek for potential ways to treat the gap.

Methodology

Multiple steps would be undertaken to reveal the reasons behind the conservative views of Saint Petersburg and possible means to overcome them. The methodology used in the research will be combined out of different methods, which will be supporting the three main topics of theoretical framework, which are as stated above:

1. Architecture Values of Saint Petersburg
2. The discourse about the contemporary development of the city
3. The gaps between the Architecture and the citizens

The combined methodology will be using the idea of unfolding the city into its *technicities*, values and historic layers in order to identify the crucial points in the city fabric, where the change can be made.

As mentioned the three main aspects of the research will be Historical Layers, Technicities and Values:

- I. Field research (main aspect of the Theoretical Framework - Architecture Values of Saint Petersburg)

The important part of the research is the site visit and explorations of the city environment. Despite the fact that I come from the city myself, I believe the important part of the research will be to experience the city and its' current state

- II. Historical Layers (main aspect of the Theoretical Framework – Roots of Conservatism the discourse about the contemporary development of the city)

The historical background of the city's development will help to establish the point/points that influenced the formation of the conservative views in the city. The Historical layer of present will show the relation between the current architectures discourse and the past trends that developed the architecture of the city

- III. Technicities (main aspect of the Theoretical Framework - The gaps between the Architecture and the citizens) :

Technicities are understood as processes where people, technology and environment come together. Unfolding the processes that happen in the city into different actors, availabilities and situations will help to establish the current gaps in the Architectural development.

After completing the research in the mentioned theoretical framework and methodology I expect to understand which aspects of the city reinforce the stagnation of architecture and what kind of intervention will be needed to challenge those problems. Unfolding the layers of history as well as the processes that occur in it help me to identify the moments, when the architectural nature of the city turned away from being progressive and what elements can be used to provoke the change.

Argument of relevance

As an architect I do not agree with the conservative views of the architecture of the city I come from. I believe that we should preserve the past, but not get stuck in it, opening up to the possibilities for developing the architecture of the city and the country. Re interpreting the values we find in the current state of the city and enlarging our views with the values from across the border are an important part of architectures development. I believe that in Saint Petersburg it is necessary to abandon the conservative, preservatory approach and proceed with the innovative mindset to make a progressive push in the architectures of the city and the country.

Despite the fact that Saint Petersburg developed based on imposed traditions brought from abroad I do not wish to do the same in my project by simply introducing the Western Contemporary Architecture to the Historic City Center. I believe that the historic appearance of the city which represents the innovative approach of the 18th and 19th centuries should be supported by the architecture which re-interprets those values. The initial progressive nature of Saint Petersburg and its' architecture can become a good base for the future development. Trying to strike for its' past the city neglects its' own future (Maria Elkina, 2019) and I see a necessity in changing this approach to seek further progress in the field of Architecture of the country and the city.

I see the history of the city and its` architecture important for the development of Saint Petersburg's` appearance today and believe that the approach should be balanced with implementing the contemporary architectural trends. And I believe that this research can help me to outline the current gaps and problems happening in the realm of architecture of the city, gain deeper understanding of the discussion around the treatment of architecture heritage and better understand the roots of conservative views of the citizens of Saint Petersburg.

Chapter I. Historical background and context

Saint Petersburg was founded by tsar Peter the Great in 1703 and was from the very beginning planned to be the capital of Russian Empire. Peter the Great believed that Russia of his time was behind the Western world in terms of technological developments and achievements and wanted to stimulate the exchange between the cultures (Gorbatenko, 2015). For this he believed it was necessary to create a capital, which would have an appearance of a Western European city.

Peter the Great always admired European traditions and architecture, had a couple of major trips to Western Europe in 1709 and 1716 and was highly influenced by the Western culture. The second trip of the tsar in 1716 – 1717, when the city of Saint Petersburg was already founded and was rapidly taking up the speed of construction, was mainly architecturally oriented rather than political (Gorbatenko, 2015). The tsar himself was doing sketches and blueprints, shooting in his mind the image of the future capital. Inspired by canals of Amsterdam and Venice, architecture of such world known capitals as Paris, Rome and London he desired to bring the same “European” feeling into the new Russian Capital.

Following this will the tsar invited a lot of foreign architects and city planners to work on the city of Saint Petersburg. People such as Jean-Baptiste Alexandre Le Blond, Reiner Ottens, Giovanni Maria Fontana, Domenico Trezzini came to bring European understanding of architecture to Russian Empire. All the plans for the city were drawn under tsars’ control and the historic center we see today was created by strict planning based on 18th century Western European traditions.

The same tendency to invite European architects was kept during the reign of following rulers (Empresses Anna Ioanovna, Elizabeth Petrovna and Catherine II the Great) and the historic city center of Saint Petersburg gained the monumental splendor with various palaces and cathedrals built by Italian, French and British architects - Bartolomeo Francesco Rastrelli, Antonio Rinaldi, Giacomo Quarenghi, Charles Cameron, Jean-Baptiste Vallin de la Monthe, Carlo Rossi. Nevertheless, having a strict urban development plan the architectural ensemble of Saint Petersburg demonstrates a “perfect harmony of architecture and waterscapes” (UNESCO, n.d) with a domination of baroque and neoclassical architecture.

Despite the amount of palaces, royal residences and grand academies (later followed by factories and plants, which developed a “second belt” in the 20th century) the city was forming a horizontal silhouette throughout its history. The imperial feeling of the city was always outlined with a number of vertical landmarks (Kazansky Cathedral, Isaakievsky Cathedral, Admiralty), around which the cultural centers were formed. One of the most important spires in Saint Petersburg is the spire of Peter and Pauls Cathedral – the first landmark of Saint Petersburg founded in 1712 which remained the tallest building in Saint Petersburg with the height of 122,5 meters until 2012. The top of the Peter and Pauls spire – an angel with the cross – until nowadays remains one of the symbols of the city and stands by numerous legends.

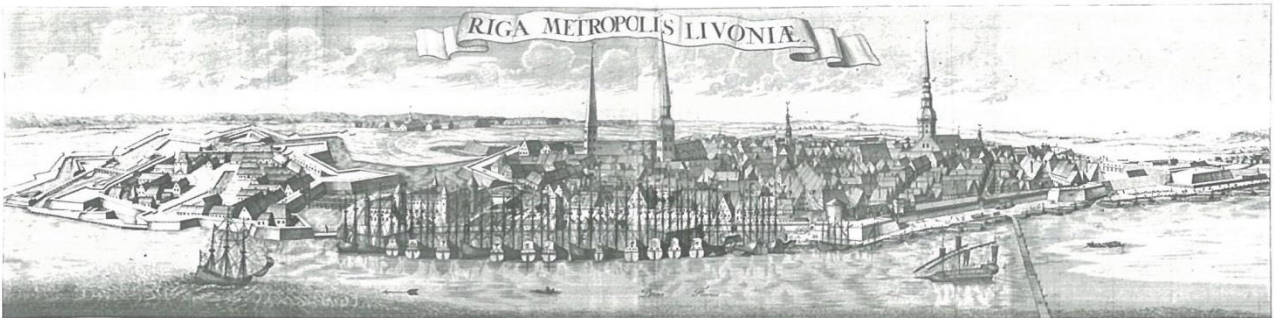


Figure 1. Engraving of Riga by F.B.Verner 1720

Today the first core of the city – its` historic part built through 18-19th centuries – is world known as Northern Venice and conquers the hearts of millions visitors. The city's planning was a long and thought through process carried by tsar Peter the Great. During his travels and campaigns around Europe the tsar was inspired by the views that opened from the water on some of the foreign cities. One of them was Riga, siege of which lit up in Peter the Great a will to fit Saint Petersburg into the overall image of other fortresses of the Baltics with their spires and domes arising above the sea waters (Figure 1) (Gorbatenko, 2015). It is also not a surprise that the Admiralty and East-Indian shipyard of Amsterdam highly influenced the tsar and that they became the prototypes of the ensembles that appeared on the banks of the Neva river. All the knowledge and inspiration the Great Tsar brought with him from his "European Trips" influenced the development of the city not only during his reign, but long after. Today the historic center of Saint Petersburg, and most importantly its' skyline and waterfront views, is a part of UNESCO World Heritage List and is protected by the cities law.

The water gateways and the view of the city from the water was always an important part of cities planning (Gorbatenko, 2015). Multiple architecture ensembles were created to give Sant Petersburg the impression of a Western European city and the Capital of Russian Empire. Not only the view from the water, but the banks of the river and numerous canals ecame an important part of the city, becoming promenades and landmarks o the Northern Capital.

For many years the historic city center of Saint Petersburg was protected and valued by the citizens. A lot of contemporary projects were opposed by public and not allowed to be built. The city regulations restrict development, which can influence the current view on the historic city center, which panorama is part of the World Heritage List. Through its' history citizens of Saint Petersburg have developed certain conservative view, which do not allow the city to develop, tightening it back to its past. And the reasons for that also lie in the nature of the Historic Development of the Northern Capital of Russia.

Chapter II. Roots of conservatism in Saint Petersburg and current Architectural discourse

In Oxford dictionary the meaning of conservatism is the following – commitment to traditional values and ideas with opposition to change and innovation. In the architecture of Saint Petersburg this can be very well seen in the examples of current projects and movements, which call that the city “does not need new fancy buildings, but needs to keep its’ traditional looks” (Pechenkina, 2018). But what are the traditional values that are so cherished by the citizens of Saint Petersburg and why are they perceived to be better than the progressive architecture concepts of the 21st century?

If we look at the first chapters of Saint Petersburgs’ history we can see that the original nature of the city was to be innovative, bringing new culture to Russian Empire and opening it up to Western traditions and technologies which were one of the most innovative at the time. Saint Petersburg was built to be one of the most forward-looking cities in Russia – in terms of culture, education, political views and also architecture. After its establishment as the capital in 1712 most of the conservative parties moved out of the city to Moscow which at first was the hub of the opposition to the Western European Traditions. But today we see the situation completely switched around with Moscow being the capital of Russia and one of the most progressive cities and Saint Petersburg considered the cultural, but also the conservative capital. So when did the switch happen and what were the reasons that one of the most progressive cities in the whole country turned to be the “dying conservative opposition” (Maria Elkina, 2020)?

The rise of Saint Petersburg as an innovative and a progressive city was seen during the reign of Romanov Ruling family through the 18th and 19th century. Those were the years when foreign, more often Western European, specialists were invited to the country and were in charge of developing the science, architecture, art and culture of the Russian Empire. The establishments of first Universities in Saint Petersburg, development of Sail and other Crafts Schools influenced the development of the country and its place on the European and World Political Arena. Saint Petersburg was the heart and brain of the Russian Empire while its rise in Europe and that grand part of its history is widely revealed in the city’s architecture – in the amount of grand Palaces belonging to the richest families in Europe, Cathedrals and Chapels built to commemorate battles and war victories. The development of the country’s culture and education was on its peak of acceleration.

In the 20th century the city began to develop its’ “second belt” – the new row of industrial buildings and factories, the first signs of technological revolution. But due to not only participation of the country in WWI, but also internal political problems, lack of human rights for commoners and poor workers’ rights the quick tempo of scientific development of the country started to slow down. The first revolutionary commotions began to slow down the industrial development of Saint Petersburg, switching the main focus of ruling dynasty to containing the current state of the country, which left the city with a dominance of educated aristocracy as a fundament of the city’s elite even during the revolution.

After the October Revolution in 1917 most of the educated elite escaped the city (as well as the country), since the majority were supporting the Monarch Ruling Family. Following this outflow of aristocracy, the capital of Russia (and later the Soviet Union) was moved to Moscow (the city which was the capital before Saint Petersburg was built) and the city and its architecture came to an era of its’ decline. The architecture of the city turned from being the center of the life of the country to an estate ruled by the past (Project Russia, Issue 26).

To let go all the memories of the Imperial Russia the historic city center Saint Petersburg starting being neglected. The outskirts of the city start growing with tall residential housing, whilst the grand architecture of the city center is abandoned or hidden behind a new layer of plaster. The development of industry (therefore of industrial architecture) have also been slowed down since the main forces were thrown into developing the new capital of the country.

The minority of culture admirers who were left in the city (as well as in the country, since the soviet regime was striking to rise the proletariat class) started being small and enclosed around what was left in the city. Small private circles of architects, poets and painters started worshiping the classical heritage of the city and despise the developing industrial values.

After the collapse of Soviet Union and the following depression those circles became more powerful in their ideology, since the Communism system was seen as the failed one. This was strikingly raising the awareness of people about Saint Petersburg's Royal past. Palaces started reopening, museum started receiving more visitors. In the 90s the city started regaining its image as the city, which is "the Window to Europe" and also gained the image of the "culture capital" of Russia.

Today the years of Saint Petersburg being the capital are the ones which are valued the most among citizens. People are looking back to the time when the city was "shining" the most. That creates the opposition to anything new arising in the city. The Soviet Era of Saint Petersburg is seen as the time when the great past of the city was neglected, therefore the citizens today who are proud to be the inhabitants of the "culture capital" not only emphasize on that title but also believe in the importance of keeping the city's image from 300 years ago.

Through this brief run over the history of Saint Petersburg it is possible to determine the values that today are seen as "traditional" for the city. During the cities rise as the capital of Russian Empire in 18th and 19th century the aesthetical, educational and cultural values were highly emphasized, while during the Soviet Period the city experienced deliberate disregard of its' development and it develops a belief that most of the cultural and traditional values of the city were formed during its Imperial Time. Therefore, this heritage and those traditional aspects are the ones that are tried to be protected from the innovative development by the conservatism clusters of the city. Moreover, the strong presence of Baroque and Classicism over the Industrial Heritage of 20th century create an impression that the industrial revolution never touched Saint Petersburg (Vorobyev & Shtiglitz, (2014).

Partly because of the nature of previous city development it is believed among a lot of citizens that anything new will ruin the image of the "culture capital" that exists in their minds. Today mainly the culture heritage of the Renaissance is exposed and highly in the city, which also gives an impression that if the attributes of this era will be removed the city will lose its title of the Northern and Culture capital.

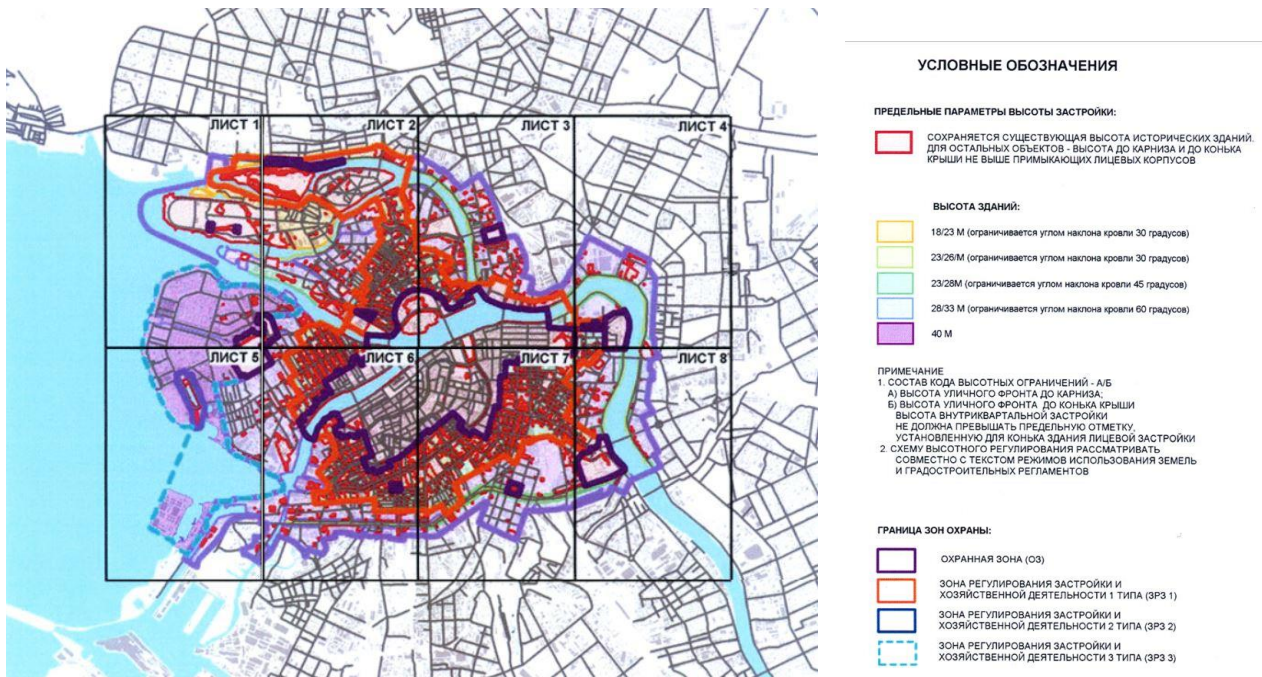


Figure 2. Height regulations for the Central districts of St. Petersburg operating from 2014

To bring an example above is the map of height regulations that exist in the city of Saint Petersburg (Figure 2). This extract represents really well the protected areas of the city center, since one of the important “historical features” of the city is its’ urban skyline and the views from the riverfronts. This paper shows the maximum allowance for the height of buildings in the central part of Saint Petersburg, which is determined by the original borders which appeared on the plans of Peter the Great and inside which the city developed until 1860s, when the expansion to the South and East started (Figures 3 and 4). In 1900s the development of the city toward the North started (Figure 5), so the central part became surrounded by the newer districts. Nevertheless the original gateway to the sea from Vasilievskii and Petrogradskii islands was kept and the main waterways of the Finnish Gulf and Neva river remained as central and historic parts of the city. To keep the original appearance of those views and skyline seen from the water the height regulations in the central part of the historic city center say that every new build has to be “up to the cornice and up to the ridge of the roof, not higher than the adjoining front hulls” (Regulations for Central Region of SPb, 2021). This is usually the height of not taller than 18 meters, which goes up to 23 on the Eastern banks of the Neva river (green marks on the map of height regulations). On the edge of the historic center as well as on the Vasilievskii island the maximum height of buildings goes up to 40 meters (purple colored areas on the height regulation map), but still all the development in those areas is under governmental regulations.

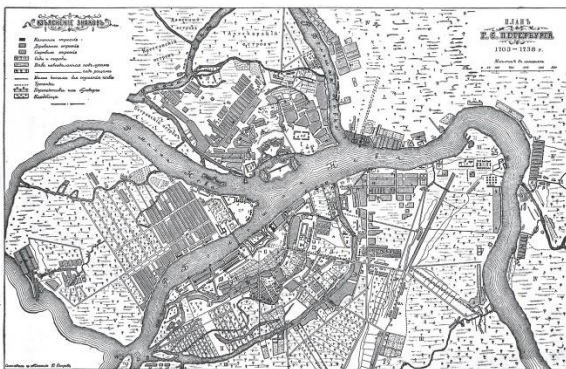


Figure 3. Map of SPb 1703-1738 by P.Petrov

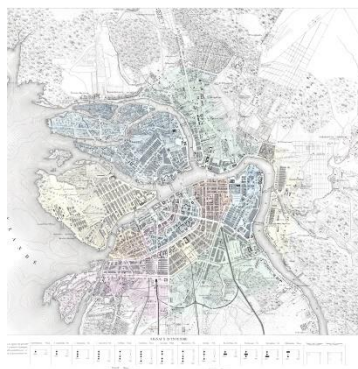


Figure 4. Map of SPb 1860 by Paulinski

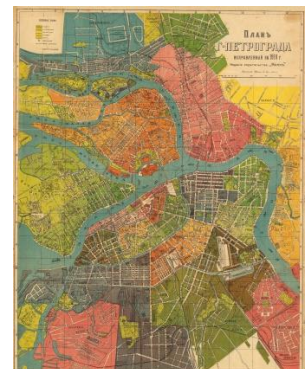


Figure 5. Map of SPb 1918
Published by Mayak

This abstract of the Height Regulations represents really well the area of protection that exist in Saint Petersburg as well as the main area where the conservatism movements apply. And nevertheless this particular abstract only talks about the height of the buildings and not a word about their appearance, the look of contemporary architecture is something that “scares the minds of the locals” (Maria Elkina, 2019).

It will be fair to say that today not only the citizens of Saint Petersburg, but also its’ architects are separated in between the two camps – people who believe that the only right way to treat the architecture of the city is to preserve its historical appearance (also can be referred as conservativisms) and people who believe that it is necessary to shake the city a little bit with new projects.

There are a lot of acts on preservation the historical heritage, but since a lot of buildings stayed unused during the Soviet period now a lot of them are in a really bad state. According to the National register there is up to 100 residential buildings in emergency state which are scheduled to demolition (or sometimes renewal) in 2023, half of them dating back to 18th and 19th century. And this is not counting the abandoned Palaces and former High Class Residences as well as numerous Factories of the beginning of the 20th century. As well as the result of poor treatment during the Soviet Times those building are left to die in the very heart of the city due to numerous regulations and preconceptions about the treatment and preservation of architecture. The conservativist population of the city claims that Saint Petersburg has to try and keep its’ historic appearance of the city center and not let it ‘disgrace itself following the numerous European cities, such as Paris and London” (Oreshkin, 2022).

At the same time there is a circle of progressively tuned architects, who see the historic fabric of the city as the opportunity to experiment with architecture approaches. A lot of those suggestions can be very well seen during some Round Table discussions organized not only by architecture Chambers, but also independent Architecture Journals, such as “Project Russia”. One of the issues of the journal features the recent architectures of Saint Petersburg and discusses the trends that today rule the city of Saint Petersburg. The opening interview with the chief architect of Saint Petersburg (for the time of the publication) Oleg Kharchenko already with its’ name states the problem that is currently existing “There Should be contemporary architecture in Saint Petersburg” (Project Russia, 2003). But at the same time Kharchenko outlines that even the students, who should be a progressive generation of today fall into the trap of perceiving the city as a museum where ‘austerely elegance’ should be exposed (Oleg Kharchenko, 2003).

The issue also outlines the fact that the current strategy of preservation can be considered as a ‘Strategy of survival’ rather than a road to development (Goldhorn, 2003). And even though those words are two decades old they still can be used now – the conservative nature of Saint Petersburg of today have kept it frozen in time. It seems like the city itself rejects the opportunities to bring fresh architectures into it. And what is the city if not its’ citizens?

As a result of this conservative approach to the architecture of Saint Petersburg we see a lot of buildings around the city which are not allowed to be touched by the municipalities and city planning. In the end the buildings stay unused for years and since there is no also clear preservation strategy for those buildings that have direct impact on the most iconic views of the city most of the buddings begin to decay. They become not possible to be used and sometimes even repair, so they have to be torn down due to their emergency state. After they are being rebuilt in their “original state” not to change the appearance of the city center. This approach inhibits the architectural development of the city, keeping it in a swamp (Levchuk, 2003). But how to expose Saint Petersburg to the open-minded architects of the 21st century and bring new blood into the historic city center allowing it to breathe again?

Chapter III. The actors of Architecture in Saint Petersburg

Revising the previous Chapter it can be seen that the main ground for the conservatism approach is the fear of the future and the new. Multiple times talking to the people who live in Saint Petersburg for the hole of their lives I heard a question “But what if new architecture will just make it worse?”. In the mids of the citizens, who see the Royal heritage as the main pillar of cities culture and appearance. The buildings which do not support this heritage are seen as “mistakes” in the city fabric (Popov, 2006) and are negatively perceived by the public. The intruders into the city fabric are seen as heretics that want to burn the city to the ground.

Despite the fact of existence of a couple of actually bold interventions into the city fabric that can be a supportive statement for this mindset, the rest of the projects are put in one line with “disgusting architecture solutions, which do not care about the past of the city”. Those comments can be widely seen on different forums and heard in the discussions, but in reality do not have a lot to do with the actual position of the architects in Saint Petersburg.

To define the connections that happen not only in architecture production but also in the living culture of Saint Petersburg I will be using the concept of technicities. This process should unfold the anchor points of the discussion about the architecture of Saint Petersburg defining the actors, available technologies and environments which happen in the Processed of Architecture, Building Production and Living Culture.

First step is to define the Actors, Technologies and Environments present in all three processes (Figure). It is noticeable that in the Architecture and Building Productions there are Actors and Environments are shared, whilst the Technologies differ. In the living Culture it can be noticed that a lot of actor groups have multiple actors involved in the processes.

Technicities used for research and their Actors (People involved in the process), Technology (available and used for the process) and Environment (spaces in which processes happen) are represented in the table below (Figure 6).

<i>Architecture production</i>			<i>Buildig production</i>			<i>Living Culture</i>		
PEOPLE (actors)	TECHNOLOGY (avalliable)	ENVIRONMENT (spaces)	PEOPLE (actors)	TECHNOLOGY (available)	ENVIRONMENT (spaces)	PEOPLE (actors)	TECHNOLOGY (avalliable)	ENVIRONMENT (spaces)
Architects - project architects - city architects	Archiecture/ engineering software	Architecture offices Building site	Engineses Builders Contractors	Machinery Materials (+ material production) - export - import	Building site Architecture offices	Permanent citizens - native - long term integrated	Rental websites Rental agencies Student housing portals from univesities	Owned houses/ appartments Rented houses/ appartments - long term - short term
Engineers	Theoretical knowledge	Architecture univercities	Investors			Short term citizens - workimmigrants - summerworkers - immigrants - students	Instagram/VK/ Telegram	Student halls
Investors		Governmental institutions	Clients	Crafstmship			Interactive maps fo the city	Hotels/Hostels
Governmental structures						Tourists - short term visitors - long term tourism	Personal blogs Magazines	Places of leisure Work places
Contractors								
Clients								

Figure 6. Table of Technicities used for the research and their break down into actors, technologies and environment.

The next step of the process is to outline the links in-between the different groups inside the processes. That can outline the correlation of things inside the specific process and see where the interaction nodes are (Figure 7).

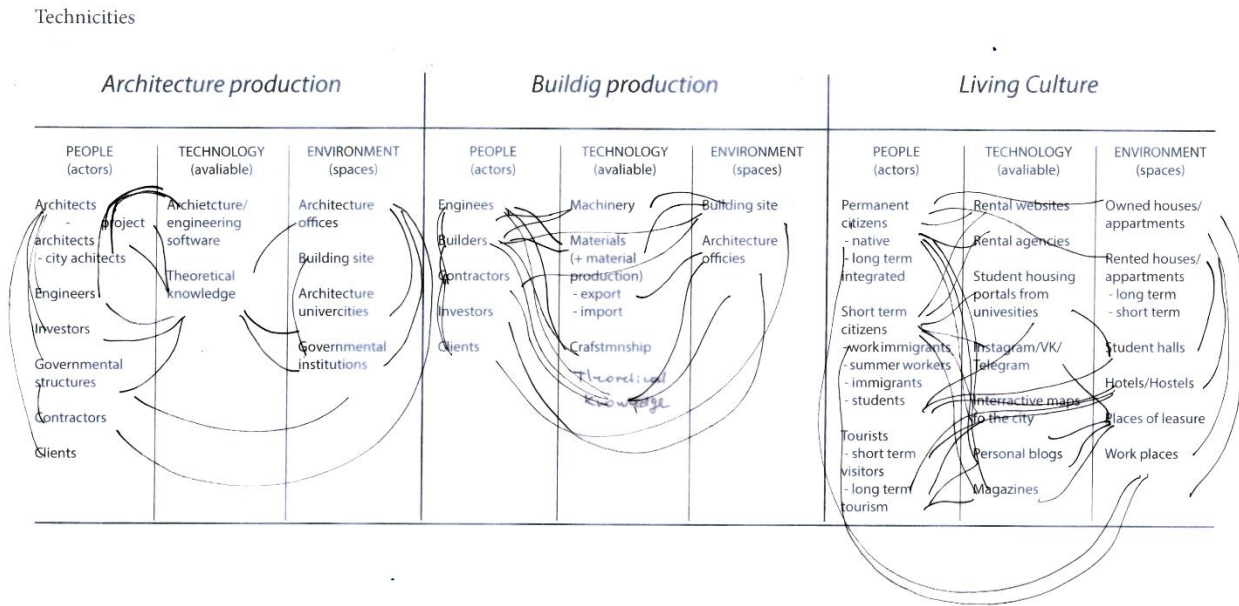


Figure 7. Links in-between technicities inside the processes

In the next diagram we can see which groups, spaces and processes relate to each other (Figure 8). The biggest gaps occurring is the gap between the whole process of architecture production and the citizens of the city as well as the interaction in between the students, which are a big cluster of the Northern Capital and the “old guard of the city” (which can also be related as the “conservativism core”).

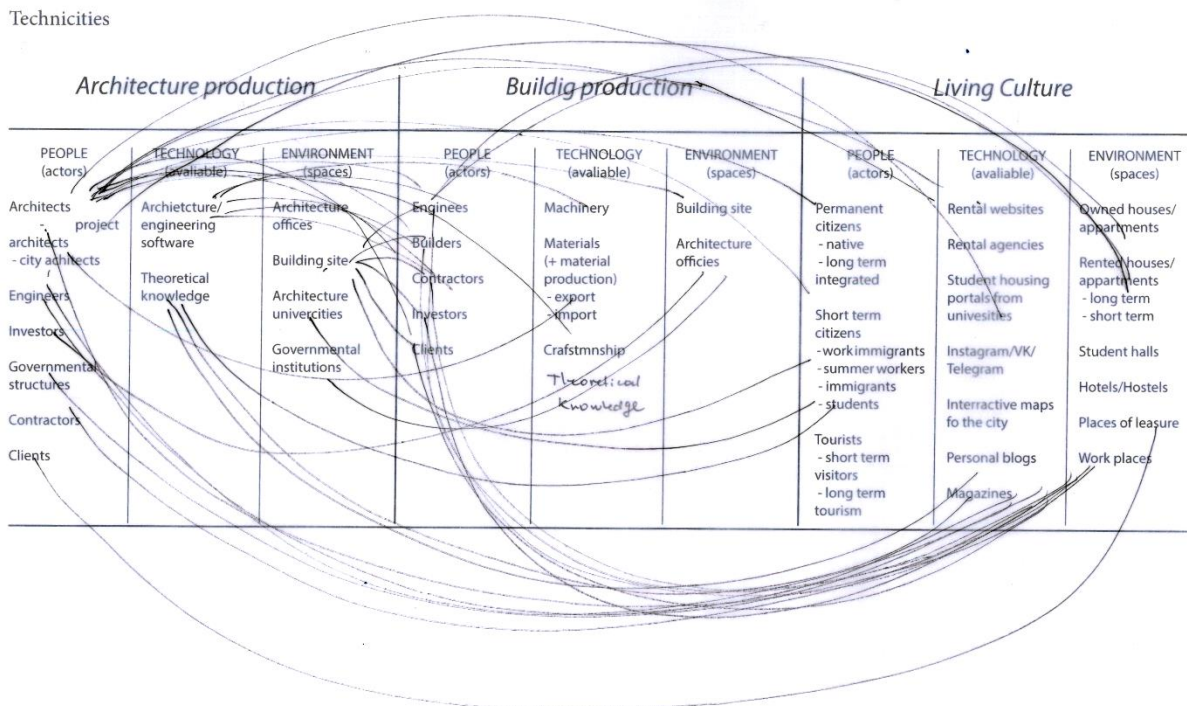


Figure 8. Links in-between technicities of different processes

If we overlay the two together we can establish the main anchor points of both interruptions and see what are the existing and missing bridging points (Figure 9).

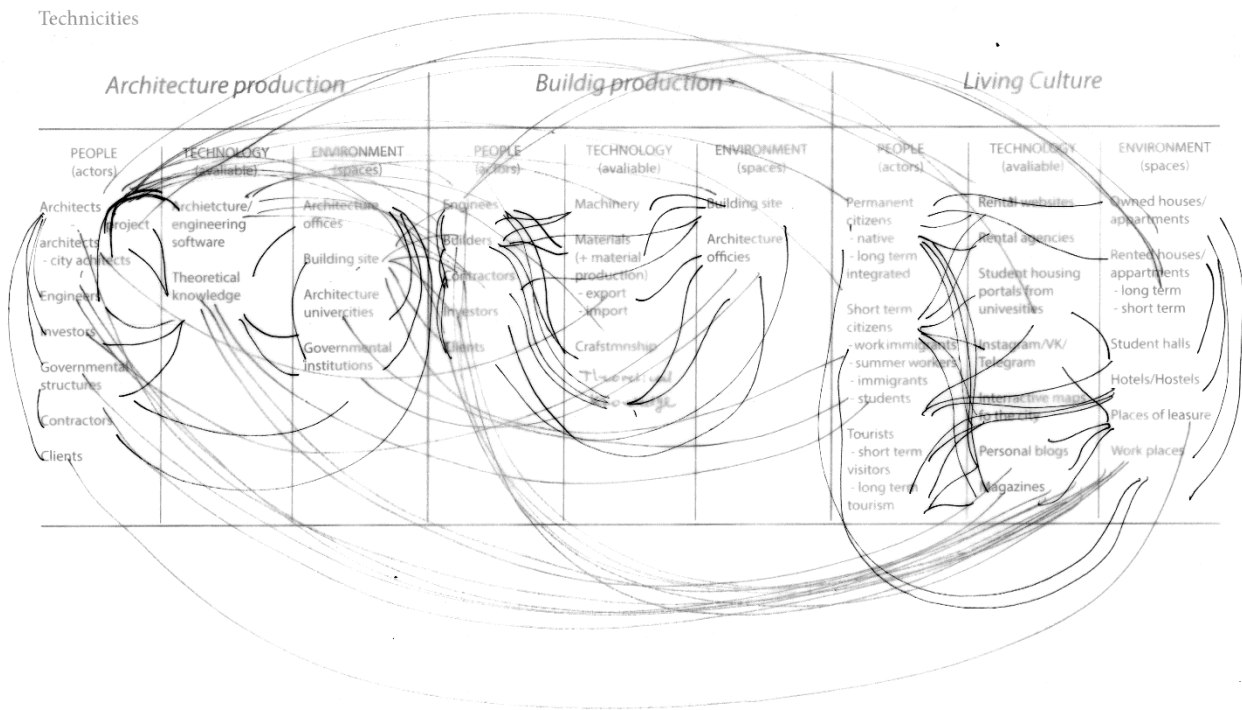


Figure 9. Overlay of “inside” and “outside” links of the processes

Following the relation establishment, we can clearly see the gap between the Theoretical Framework of Architecture and local citizens. The knowledge about architecture decision making processes is usually a mystery to wider public and is only accessible inside the enclosed bodies of Architecture Universities in Russia. On a side with drawing out those relations it is important to keep in mind certain peculiarities that obtain in the field of Russian Architecture and Living Cultures (Figure 10).

<i>Architecture production</i>			<i>Building production</i>			<i>Living Culture</i>		
PEOPLE (actors)	TECHNOLOGY (available)	ENVIRONMENT (spaces)	PEOPLE (actors)	TECHNOLOGY (available)	ENVIRONMENT (spaces)	PEOPLE (actors)	TECHNOLOGY (available)	ENVIRONMENT (spaces)
Architects - project architects - city architects	Architecture/ engineering software	Architecture offices Building site	Engineers Builders Contractors	Machinery Materials (+ material production) - export - import	Building site Architecture offices	Permanent citizens - native - long term integrated	Rental websites Rental agencies Student housing portals from universities	Owned houses/ apartments Rented houses/ apartments - long term - short term
Engineers	Theoretical knowledge	Architecture universities	Investors	Craftsmanship		Short term citizens - workimmigrants - summer workers - immigrants - students	Instagram/VK/ Telegram Interactive maps for the city	Student halls Hotels/Hostels Places of leisure
Investors		Governmental institutions	Clients			Tourists - short term visitors - long term tourism	Personal blogs Magazines	Work places
Governmental structures								
Contractors								
Clients								
<p>Architecture of Saint Petersburg is a very enclosed circle of certain architects.</p> <p>The circle excludes possibilities of large scale foreign influence.</p> <p>This tendency results into the conservativeness of the cities' architecture without inflow of new ideas and concepts.</p>			<p>Some buildings even in good condition are getting demolished by the governmental authorities</p> <p>This creates a negative view of citizens towards the construction in the historic city center</p> <p>In the process of building the neighboring houses often get damaged – protection of them is very poor from the building side</p>			<p>The majority of coming students stay in the city afterwards for work</p> <p>Often not local students have problems with integration, since they are seen as foreigners</p> <p>Local people can be very arrogant towards the way we live in the city, spend our leisure time and value our home</p>		

Figure 10. Cultural and contextual peculiarities of the chosen Processes

Chapter IV. Gaps between Architecture production and the citizens

In the previous chapter there were important gaps outlined between the processes of Architecture, Building Production and Living culture in the city of Saint Petersburg. They brought us to the main outcome that some of the main gaps exist between the actual inhabitants of the city and the whole process behind making architecture – from education to the final creation of a building.

Diving deeper into the topic it can be seen that there is a lot of misunderstanding behind contemporary architecture projects and less progressive population of the city – most of the innovative architecture is simply “not understood” by the regular citizens of Saint Petersburg. So, in simplification it can be stated that one of the main roots of conservativist approach to architecture in the city of Saint Petersburg comes from the lack of understanding of current architectural trends and the ideas behind certain innovative decisions. At the moment most of the new projects are seen as “monsters” which are ruining the historical layers of the city, even if architectural ideas behind it are aimed to highlight or preserve the heritage of the past.

As an example, we can use the competition for the Island of New Holland which was renovated in 2011. The project was open for different entries and a number of international architects have taken part in the competition. The voting was done not only by the commission, but also by the public. That was the attempt to make the citizens of Saint Petersburg to be more involved in the process as well to ensure the satisfaction with the result. A number of entries proposed restoring the existing building, but adding some touches of contemporary architecture that would be showing the possibilities of what can be done today. Nevertheless, the public was against most of them, since they believed that there is a need “to restore the historical look of the Island and show the great architecture of Peter’s time”. So, a more conservative project of renovation and rebuilt of ruined structures was chosen in the end. Apart from the floating beach in the middle of the canal, the project just rebuilds the ruined buildings in the same way they were constructed in the time of Peter the Great and brings a couple of nice uses such as restaurants and public park to attract visitors. But if we look at other entries we can see more brave proposals, which would not only feature the architecture of the past, but also bring a touch of new development into the city.

But all those projects received negative review from public and among all have been called “*obscene attitude to treating the cultural heritage of the Historic Architecture of Saint Petersburg, which does not take into account local values and cultural background*”. But not diving deep into the case studies of the proposed projects it can be seen that a lot of them feature the architectural context – by use of red brick as main material, arched ceilings as guiding themes, close accesses to water. With a little more understanding of the projects it can be seen that actually all of them reinterpret the cultural values and try to highlight them, but a “common man does not see deeper than the flat surface of Neva river” (Maria Elkina, 2019).

Therefore, comes a question: if one of the main roots of conservativist approach to architecture of Saint Petersburg comes from the lack of understanding current architectural projects how can this gap be treated to start a dialogue between the forward looking architects and the conservative population of the city.

Design Relation

As a result of this research about the conservative approach to architecture in Saint Petersburg we can see how citizens are opposing the contemporary architecture based on the lack of knowledge about the current ideas and trends as well as the view of architects. It is perceived that architects are only striking for “tall glass buildings and funky shapes”, without thinking of the context and existing structure. But what if people would know more about how the architecture in the city is made and what the actual interest behind certain proposals are?

In Chapter III it was visible how Architectural Theoretical Knowledge is detached from wider public and is only available to a smaller group of people, who actually study the subject. Architecture universities in Russia are very closed entities, the buildings (and therefore any elements of education process such as lectures or student defenses) are not accessible to public. This creates an enclosed circle of academia, where you enter as a student and exist as an architect and where this process can not be observed from the side.

Further in the project I will be testing the following statement as a reaction to the initial research question:

Opening up the academical world of Architecture to the wider public can help the citizens of Saint Petersburg to understand the processes behind Architecture making and make the first steps towards overcoming conservative views about applying contemporary architecture in the historic areas of the city.

Innovative education approach exposed to wider public can serve as a tool to overcome the conservative thinking in architecture for both architects and local citizens. Since a lot of preconception about contemporary architecture today is based on the idea that it is “tall buildings of steel and glass” (Leonidov, 2018) it is necessary to show the citizens the processes of architecture development and decision making. The insights of the processes can help the citizens to realize the actual reasons behind certain decisions (such as demolishing some buildings) and create less opposition in future.

The *transparency* of the processes is necessary to achieve the understanding in between different clusters of people. As well as the open room for a discussion, where the balance can be reached.

Conclusion

This research started as a reflection to the current situation in the city of Saint Petersburg, where the historic city center is currently experiencing a time of decay. Due to a number of bureaucratic, political and financial reasons, but also due to conservative views and approaches of the citizens the architecture of the city is not developing and is centered around preserving the historical heritage, but more importantly the look of the city of 300 years ago. During the research this approach is seen as one of the reasons the city center of Saint Petersburg is in its' current state, which leads us to a discussion on why it was developed in the city and what methods can be used to influence the way the architecture of the city is heading.

Answering this question I first look into the development of the architecture of the city which is valued the most – the historic core of 18th and 19th century developed when the city of Saint Petersburg was found to be the capital of Russian Empire. That clearly shows how much the city was influenced by Western European traditions and trends during its development and that the nature of the city from the start was to aim for the innovative and speculative approaches.

Briefly touching upon the history of the city during the Soviet era of the 20th century helps me to determine the reasons to cherish the Imperial past of the city. The fact that the city was purposely abandoned and under looked in the times of the Soviet Union brings great importance to the times, when the city was valued and worshiped. And those feelings are going through time and are establishing in the minds of people of today – if the greatest times were 300 years ago, that is what we need to look back to. Trying to strike for its' past the city neglects its' own future (Maria Elkina, 2019).

To understand what can become a possible solution to invite the citizens to have a dialogue with progressively looking architects, I used the concepts of technicities to break down the processes which happen in the city into its' actors, technologies used in the processes and environments in which they happen in. Drawing the connections between the different aspects of Architecture Production, Building Production and living culture of the city helped me to establish not only the main anchor points of interaction, but most importantly the gaps in-between them.

One of the biggest gaps between the Professional Architecture Field and the Citizens of Saint Petersburg turned out to be the lack of accessibility to theoretical knowledge behind architectural creation. Wider public has no possibilities in accessing the academical field of architecture, which brings them to believe, that "arrogant architects do not care about the normal citizens, but only cherish their own ego"(Kharchenko, 2003).

Taking all this into account we can go back to answer the initial research question, which was aimed to enter and possibly manipulate the current discussion about architecture development in the city of Saint Petersburg.

Which methods can influence the discussion about applying contemporary architecture in historically important areas of the city of Saint Petersburg?

Following the research outcomes and findings I believe that it is necessary to bring citizens of Saint Petersburg closer to the world of architecture academia. This will not only help local citizens to understand how decisions are made in the Architecture Design process, but will also help architects to understand better the needs of local citizens and make their decisions more context oriented. Understanding of the aspects and decision making can show the importance of certain choices and the need for change. To avoid misunderstandings about certain architecture decisions it is important to show the process of architecture in making. And since University where the formation of an architect is starting to make the academia world more transparent for wider public can bring them closer to understanding the processes behind decision making.

Making the world of Architecture Academia more *accessible* for public will help to *erase the boundaries* between architects and citizens of Saint Petersburg and help to *overcome* the conservatism about applying contemporary architecture in the Historic Areas of the City.

Research comments

This research surely has a lot to improve on and can go much deeper in many aspects. The proposed solution on how to erase the current gap between the architects and local citizens is only addressing one aspect of the currently existing problem. The direction the research took is aimed to understand the reasons of conservative thinking among the citizens of Saint Petersburg and possible ways to overcome them within the architectural discourse, but it is important to realize that to properly address the topic in the future it is necessary to understand that the problem that the city is facing is quite complex and to solve it a much more broad approach that features not only architectural, but also ideological and educational aspects needs to be applied. One of the elements which is just briefly touched in the research are the present architecture values that can be helpful in adapting the contemporary architecture to the architecture of the city and might become a key to deal with conservatism towards contemporary architecture.

In the end I can say that if I had to do this research all over again, I will probably have been flashed away in the same direction trying to figure out how to convince people that contemporary architecture is necessary for the development of cities architecture and its' future growth. But if I could do one more research following this project and having the current outcomes it would be much more important to focus on the present architectural elements and their possible reinterpretation in contemporary ways.

Bibliography

Bibliography

Batchaev, A.R., Zhikharevich, B.S. (2014). Saint Petersburg in the post-Soviet time: economic strategies and development. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, v4 n34, pp. 68-83.

[Галкина Юлия, Акимов Антон В., Косьмин Максим](#)

Galkina, U., Akimov A.V., Kosmin M. (2021) *The stories of Saint Petersburgs` houses told by their inhabitants*, BOMBORA

Gambassi, R. (2016) Identity of Modern Architecture in historical city environment. *Architecture and Engineering*, v1 n2, pp. 27-72.

[Gorbatenko, S. \(2015\) Peter the Great's architectural Itineraries](#). Saint Petersburg: Historic Illustrations

Gorishina, T (2006) *Architectural Flora of saint Petersburg*, Iskusstvo-SPB

Isachenko V.G, (2005) *Monumental and decorative architecture of Saint Petersburg*, Paritet

Kostof, S. (2001). *The city Shaped. Urban patterns and meaning through history*. London : Thames and Hudson (Chapter 5: The Urban Skyline).

Krasnopolsky, A., Bolotin, S. (2018). A second level of Saint Petersburg Skyline. *E3S Web of Conferences*, v33.

Vorobyev, D., & Shtiglitz, M. (2014). Industrial Heritage Issues in a Conflict Case: Okhta Center in St.Petersburg, Russia. In H. A. Mieg & H. Oevermann (Eds.), *Industrial Heritage Sites in Transformation. Clash of Discourses*. Routledge

Journals

Project Russia, (1995-...). *Numerous Issues used*. Published in co-operation with O10 Publishers

Sources

Ageeva, M. writing about an Open Discussion (2022) *Is Contemporary architecture acceptable in the historic city centre* NSP.RU [Допустима ли современная архитектура в историческом центре? | Экономика | Селдон Новости \(myseldon.com\)](#) [Accessed January 2023]

Elkina, M. (2021), *Maria Elkina – about how Lakhta Center made a revolution in the minds of peterspubrers, what a city will look like after the pandemic and how we can prevent its` disruption*. Sobaka SPb. Available at: [Мария Элькина — о том, как «Лакhta-центр» совершил революцию в сознании петербуржцев, каким будет город после пандемии и как нам не допустить его руинирования | Sobaka.ru](#) [Accessed on 15.04.2022]

Elkina, M. (2020), *Architect Alexander Brodsky, co-author of the museum of poet Brodsky – about the space at the house of Murusi, his love to Saint Peterburg and “paper Architecture*. Sobaka SPb. Available at:

[Архитектор Александр Бродский, соавтор проекта музея поэта Бродского — о пространстве в Доме Мурузи, любви к Петербургу и «бумажной архитектуре» | Sobaka.ru](#) [Accessed on 15.04.2022]

Elkina, M. (2020), *Petersburg – is the city on the sea, but we begin to realize it only now. Why the citizens did not value Finskii Gulf for 300 years*. Sobaka SPb. Available at: [Архитектор Александр Бродский, соавтор проекта музея поэта Бродского — о пространстве в Доме Мурузи, любви к Петербургу и «бумажной архитектуре» | Sobaka.ru](#) [Accessed on 15.04.2022]

Elkina, M (2021), *Petersburg – resort city: Marial Elkina on our parasitic attitude to urban space* Sobaka SPb. Available at: [Город-курорт Петербург: Мария Элькина — о нашем паразитическом отношении к городскому пространству | Sobaka.ru](#) [Accessed January 2023]

Elkina, M (2020), *We had a beautiful city and now we are worn out and stupid* Komsomol'skaya Pravda. Available at: [Мария Элькина: «Был у нас красивый город, а теперь мы поистрепались и поглупели» - KP.RU](#) [Accessed January 2023]

Pechenkina, Y., (2018). *The future might not come: "Lakhta Center" on the background of Admiralty and barns*. NSP.RU. Available at: [Допустима ли современная архитектура в историческом центре? | Экономика | Селдон Новости \(myseldon.com\)](#) [Accessed January 2023]

Tyagnibeda, O. (2009). *Bortko: UNESCO does not matter or me, but I like Okhta Center*. Svobodnaya pressю Available at: [Владимир Бортко: ЮНЕСКО мне безразлична, а Охта-центр нравится \(svpressa.ru\)](#) [Accessed on 07.04.2020]

Salnikova, O. (2013) *Ugliness or Creativeness? Why new architecture does not fit into Petersburg* Argumenti I Fakti. Available at: [Уродство или креатив? Почему новая архитектура не вписывается в старый Петербург | ОБЩЕСТВО | АиФ Санкт-Петербург \(aif.ru\)](#) [Accessed January 2023]

Ulanova, M. (2018). *There is a chance to develop new center of Saint Petersburg alongside the sea. Paul Finch, Saunad Prasad and Sergei Kuznezov about Lakhta Center*. Sobaka spb. Available at: [Accessed on 15.03.2021]